1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

561 When the whole population of a country district is on
571 the move on Sunday, the groupings are especially note-
794 worthy. There are occasional family groups driving in the jaunty car, but generally the older men walk in a group of their own, the older women in another. The young men walk together by themselves and the young women by themselves. On Sunday afternoons the young men can be seen at the nearest crossroad standing together in groups of ten to thirty, while the older men keep more to their houses or visit one another. Before mass, when the weather permits, the men congregate outside the church and do not move in until all the women have entered and the priest has arrived. As the groups stand outside waiting for the mass to begin and gossiping back and forth, the older men stand off together and the younger men keep to themselves. In wakes, weddings, christenings, the same age groupings are observed.

561 There is, of course, no formal prescription of such be-
571 havior nor formal taboo against its infringement; the conduct rather springs from the divisions of the family and the solidarity of the individuals occupying similar status as these forces operate in everyday life. It is evident how close a connection exists between age grading and marital status.

[561] If behavior of this type reflects the age grading within the family and the transitions between age grades which are part
342 of the transformation of the family at marriage, so does the arrangement of the house interior. For a graphic representation of this characteristic arrangement, let the reader return to Figure 9. The houses of the small farmers show a remark-
● [565] able uniformity over great areas; it becomes at once apparent that the variations in house types and forms are more associable with differences of class than of locality. But as we are dealing only with the small farmer or peasant class, we need concern ourselves only with the implications of the striking uniformity in house form among the country people. Throughout West and North Clare the house is rectangular

[see p. 34. -Analyst]

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

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society hinges on this point. Much of political life is explained here. Gifts and personal favors, fashioned on the pattern of the extended family and local community, besiege (or used to besiege) magistrates and government officials. Before land reform they besieged such links with the outer world as the older estate system provided, such as the bog warden, the land steward, and the other functionaries of landlords. Yet against this pattern's sway there runs a continual incursion of other patterns which the institutions extending their sway from town life and higher social classes downward provide. In this meeting and conflict of social patterns much is to be learned of the structure of Irish social classes and of the continuing course of Irish social life.

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The matter is of interest here only as a summary of the life of the rural community itself. It occupies us only in so far as it points to a conclusion about the kinds of relationship which build up within the local community between the farmers and those of their fellows who are not farmers. There is always a primary distinction among them. There are those who have, quantitatively speaking, most of their activities taken up in relations within the local community alone, and there are those who are divided between the local community and the outside world and who make a bridge between. The former fall in one way or another into the pattern of cooring. They are a "cut below" the farmer, yet his intimates. They are the ones in relation to whom the farmer is the dominant party, since it is the farmer who commissions, hires, or otherwise sets off the other's activity, expert as it may be. The secret of the equivalence of the status of these persons with that of the landless boys lies in these facts. For the boys are in exactly the same case.

The others, however, who are in one way or another part of the outside world, are alike if only in that. Various as they are, they are never in the same case as the local handy

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

565 571 621 men and the boys. For them the patterns of dominance by the farmer, of recipiency of gifts and cooring favors, of articulation with the peasant cliques in the local community, are never complete, because of their conflict with other, external ties. The crossroad shopkeeper, the policeman, the schoolteacher, the priest, the big farmer, even the local man who becomes a county councillor by election, are always a "cut above" the farmers. They come to form a group apart. They take over near-urban standards first. Some of them, of course, priest, schoolteacher, and policeman, are often residents for only a short term. They have come to the country district they serve as strangers and outsiders, if only from the next parish. But a certain aloofness and a certain difference clings to these men even if they are natives by ancestral descent. Contact with the outer world brings in the outer world's ways and sets them apart and a little above.

Only the wanderers, the tinkers, the itinerant beggars, hawkers, and "dealing" men and women, many of them uprooted urban laborers, whose ties are with the towns and whose visits in country districts are short and predatory, fall outside this pattern. They are a special case. They are also many a "cut below" the farmers. They are an outcast lowest class.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

444 subsists only because she is a part of the local community. Though she charges a bit more, she spares one the longer walk to the village center.

Country shops are often larger than hers. Sometimes where the distance to the village center is greater, they sell nearly everything one could get in town, outside the specialized drapers' or hardware, boot, and shoe shops. They sell all the farm staples, such as groceries, sugar, flour, tea, and tobacco. Here people may come from two or three miles around. The farmers all know they pay more, but the shop is a convenience. It may get the only newspaper in the district, and men drop in to hear the news. In the evenings a local school of cards may flourish here and the boys foregather.

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The country shop reaches its zenith at the crossroad, where a church, a parochial house, a school, and a creamery may stand as well. Here the shop often dates from the days just after the famine and has had a long history of prosperity. In the past generation many such crossroads produced county councillors, and the rewards of public service often meant the acquisition of several rich farms in addition to the shop. The shop serves the surrounding countryside and collects its produce, and it derives its reward from the service it performs.

441 The position of the country shopkeeper is to be found in his place within the system of relations which make up the
● 565 community of small farmers behind his shop. His function
571 as economic agent of distribution is only part of his role. He is in a situation which must be described as a perpetual seesaw. If he is drawn too far within the local community, he loses contact with the outside world. If he is drawn too far outward, he loses touch with his customers. He must maintain a balance in a delicate equilibrium.

He is caught within a pattern of mutual obligations to the farmers on the one hand and the social system of the

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

town classes on the other. Let it suffice to show his place that in a recitation of such a shopkeeper's intimates and associates it is most often not the farmers but the members of the community who are in a similar position who figure. His associates are the parish priest, the schoolmaster, the local police, and the local "rancher." When marriages are made for his daughters, they are made with big farmers, and husbands are got at considerably greater distances than in the case of the small farmers. Along with his associates, he makes up the rural middle class, at once a halfway point and a channel of movement for the infiltration of gradual change, poised between the small farmers of the countryside and the middle and upper classes of the urban centers.

Other agencies of exchange and contact between rural communities and the outside world are as much overlaid with social sentiment and custom expressive of valuations upon local status as is the position of the crossroad shopkeeper. The form of exchange is ceremonial, and a ritual exists to express much more than the mere mechanism of contact and exchange.

The two chief occasions of economic exchange outside the shops at the crossroad or in the towns are the best examples of such ceremonial. Let us take the fairs first. The fairs are still the most important mechanism of exchange between the small farm producers and the middlemen who start farm produce upon its journey to the ultimate consumer. Nothing has risen to threaten them seriously even in this day of economic complexity. The farmers of the rural hinterland of towns and villages journey with cattle, pigs, corn, and wool to market, to sell them that day or else to carry them home again. Some big farmers sell from the land direct to dealers and jobbers. A few small farmers sell direct to neighbors. These are exceptions, and sales in market and fair are well-nigh universal.

The fairs are not only universal, they are also elaborately

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

to subordination, though they cannot clothe their acts in words and build moralities and philosophies out of them.

Today, in a democratic country, it is part of the folkways either to deny that such activities exist, or to demand that, like some unmentionable, they remain unstudied and unsaid. Yet, the student of human behaviour cannot neglect so rich and so deep-rooted a fount of human action. Nor can he afford to relegate the study entirely to distant horizons. Caste in India is a relatively safe topic for an American; caste in New England or in the South is a high explosive. Only the most painstaking objectivity and the most colourless vocabulary can safeguard the temerarious investigator. And the only fair treatment is that of the laboratory: to treat the behaviours in their own settings and to analyse them for nothing more than their function in that setting. If one adopts this view, one can no more blame the Smiths for snubbing the Joneses then one can berate one protoplasm for repelling another. In either case, one seeks the reason why and describes the manner how.

In the Irish countryside we are dealing with one broad class, the country-people. The behaviours which preserve the distinctions between them and others—townsmen, big farmers, gentry, and so on—do not concern us here. Yet within their own community—within the essential democracy of rural life—the country-people can be seen to act

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

554 in many ways to separate, to draw distinctions, to
565 repel the nonconformable. Remember that preposition 'within'. For these behaviours do not discriminate between broad groups, like the hauteur of a nobleman toward a lackey.

They operate within a larger inclusion. They are remotely like the ways of a schoolboy of the eighth grade who may scoff at the seventh-grader, look down on him, and bully him half in fun. Yet let the outside world break in, in the person of the teacher or rival schoolboys, and the distinction vanishes in the violence of united opposition. Nevertheless, intimate as they may be, these behaviours are none the less powerful. And like so much else in rural life, they find their chief expression and their most complete organization at the match, in country marriage.

From this fact springs the seeming paradox of
182 Irish rural life. A social system centring so strongly
554 round marriage and the family condemns a large
565 proportion of its members to celibacy and long-preserved virginity. The explanation lies in the very paradox. Only the words are antithetical. It is through marriage that one's group and oneself attains and retains full stature. Failure in either sphere leaves unrealized the other.

From this fact, too, comes much of the homely comedy and tragedy of rural life. One prefers the human terms. That comedy and that tragedy show themselves to the student of social behaviour in

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

another guise. They are controls upon the system. 182
They are unconscious patterns of human action 554
whose social function is to ensure conformities and 565
to enforce cohesions against internal disruption and external defection. Much of the fate of human beings, both at their own hands and at those of their fellows, conforms to the controls the community exerts in response to the system of customs and values by which it builds itself and in which it ensures its preservation.

Tragedy, for example, lies in the fate of one 463
romantic human type in rural Ireland. In the last 178
century before the introduction of railroads and the growth of towns, each local community had its local artisans. Tailors, weavers, carpenters, shoemakers, smiths, followed their lifelong trades and supplied local needs. Open any account of rural Ireland before the last quarter of the last century, such as the tales of William Carleton, and you will be rewarded with a full-blooded picture of this lusty crew. Their crafts were very primitive, but their place was sure. Since then, nearly all of them, except the smith, their peer, have been swept away before the skill of townsmen and factory. These men supplied their neighbours, lived among them, were an integral part of rural life. When poverty struck too deep, they became peripatetics, like the wandering singers, scholars, fiddlers, spalpeen labourers, petty hawkers and beggars who swarmed the roads of Ireland. The world of fairy-tale was